L'ARMÉE

A Soldier's Journey in Verse

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L’ARMÉE

Kevin Knight

For my son

"Children are a heritage from the Lord,
offspring a reward from him."
Psalm 127:3 (NIV)

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"Glasses Raised High"

Southeast Missouri State University Press
"Permanent Change of Station (PCS)"

Southeast Missouri State University Press
"Passing the Guidon"

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For diverse reasons,
But all in common service
Of this great nation

Orders in Hand

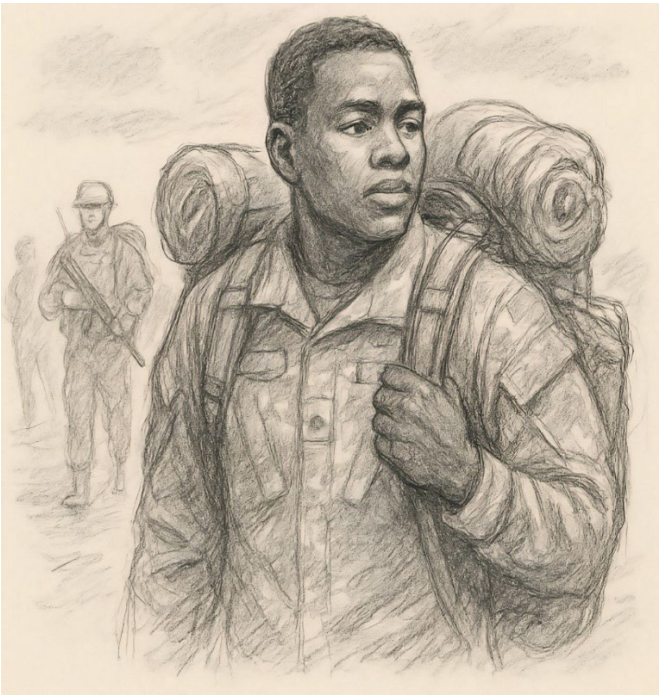
This isn't about war stories.
This is about what happens between formations:
The waiting,
The paperwork,
The days that blur.

It's about showing up—every day—
With boots tight and a face that doesn't crack.
It's about learning to lead when you're not ready
And learning to follow when you think you are.

These poems trace the arc of a uniformed life—
From first salute to final out-processing.
They capture what the memos don't say:
The smell of an MRE in July,
The silence of barracks on Sunday,
The moment a career becomes a memory.

Read these as footsteps.
I walked them. Maybe you did too.

ENLISTED YEARS



Echoes of the Offer

I have it all figured out.
See, my friends—
They lack vision.

First, I'll make the team.
Then I'll play for Duke,
The pros,
And finally—
I'll land in the Hall of Fame.

I know I've got what it takes
To be the greatest.
I believe that.

But here's the thing—
My high school coach
Told me I missed tryouts.
Now I have to wait
Another year
Just to make varsity.

Oh yeah,—
And the team sucks.

College recruiters
Don't show up
When the squad
Barely breaks 20—
Most of that
Off free throws.

But I can take them
To the championship.
I've got skills
They've never seen.

I practice every day.
I'm always on the court,
Razor-focused—

Until the Army recruiter shows up.
This dude won't quit.

Always asking
If I want to go infantry.

Says I can play
For the All-Army team
If I'm really that good.

But nah,
I'm not with that.

A couple dudes already signed up,
Shaved their heads.
And I'm like,
"Bro, you don't even leave
For basic
For six months."

Guess they're locked in.
You won't catch me
In ACUs.

Like I said—

Basketball is my life.

I'm about to hoop—
And of course,
Here he goes again.

Same old spiel:
"Check, healthcare,
Blah blah blah . . ."

He even tried
To critique
My game!

Apparently, he
Played in JUCO
A few years back.

Like I care.
I'm seventeen,
In the best shape of my life.

When I go pro,
I'll be making millions.
Why would I need
A recruiter's paycheck
Or his criticism?

Like, JUCO—REALLY?

My mom says
I should hear him out.
I told her
I'd think about it.

Ever since I tore my ACL,
She's been skeptical.
Me too, a little.

Since coming back,
I can't really jump
The same.

And okay—

Yeah, that's got me worried.

Rehab was no joke.
Doc said
I need to stop playing
For another six months.

Nah, F—that.
It's too long.

And besides,
I'm fine.

But maybe it wouldn't hurt
To have a backup plan.
Even if I never use it.

And I mean NEVER.

Here this dude comes again.
I better look busy
So he won't talk to me.

I might speak to him
One day.

But right now
I'm all in for basketball.

And there's nothing
That'll block my shine.

Especially not
A pair of combat boots
And a high and tight.

Basic Training

With eyes wide open,
We hop onto the bus and
Head to Fort Jackson.

Phone Call Home

Five minutes to say
Hello, let the fam know I'm
Alright, and miss them.

Army Combat Uniforms (ACUs)

Felt funny the
First time I put it on, but
Then it grew on me.

Tactical Foot March

Down the beaten path,
In the dead of night, with
My ruck and rifle.

Paratroopers

Casting our parachutes,
We welcome the night air into our lungs.
Slipping away to the fantasy of a perfect jump.

Exiting aircraft in synchronized harmony,
Shouting for the canopy's arrival,
Before preparing a finale of pirouetted landings.

Who knows this place between the clouds as we do?

The man in the moon smiles back at us,
Looking down twelve hundred feet from above
The landing zone, preparing the wind streams
Of a flawless evening.

The jumpmaster's bellows guide my descent back
To reality, then empower my movements
To the pickup site over yonder.

The second wave's perfect execution

Distracts us on our mile-long travel
Back to the trucks.

Cheerful chit-chat and laughter amongst the masses,
As we journey back to the hangar
For jump number two.

Bragg

New place, new people,
My new normal. This can’t be
Much worse than basic.

The Barracks

He played video
Games, another wrote, they drank
Beers, and I vibed out.

TCS Orders

My orders were cut,
And my mom and friends prayed as
I prepared myself.

Kuwait

I stepped off the plane
And into a nine-month blur
Of eat, sleep, and work.

Redeployment

Finally, the bus stops.
We pack out one by one to the dirt square;
Then offload the bags for the last time.

I can hear the echoing laughter and footsteps
Of our loved ones inside the gymnasium.

First Sergeant refocuses the masses
And steadies us for rehearsals.

There's smiles all around,
With a few sprinkled looks of indifference.

Some of the soldiers won't get the happily ever
After they first left home with,

But that's alright.
We all came home this time around,
And I think that's good enough for everyone today.

My heart's beating so fast,
As we finally begin what feels like the longest
March of my life into the gymnasium.

The installation's marching band plays
The entrance music.
I see my friends in the bleachers
Amongst the sea of crying faces
And banners that portray each soldier's name.

The music stops,
Followed by a crisp and thunderous "RIGHT-
FACE!" by the Command Sergeant Major,
One of the best non-commissioned officers
I've ever had the pleasure of serving with.

A few words from the Commander,
Followed by a few from the Commanding General,
Then finally the dismissal.

You can't put words to the emotions that fill
This room today.

I take it in one final time before I head for the door.

My friends grab my bags and
Let me know I've done enough this year—
They'll take it from here.

It's always a bittersweet moment coming back,
But I'm glad I'm finally home.

PDHRA

We were all just fine.
No matter how bad it was,
We were all just fine.

A Soldier's Tale

Her attempt on her
Life reminds us that some pain
Isn't just skin deep.

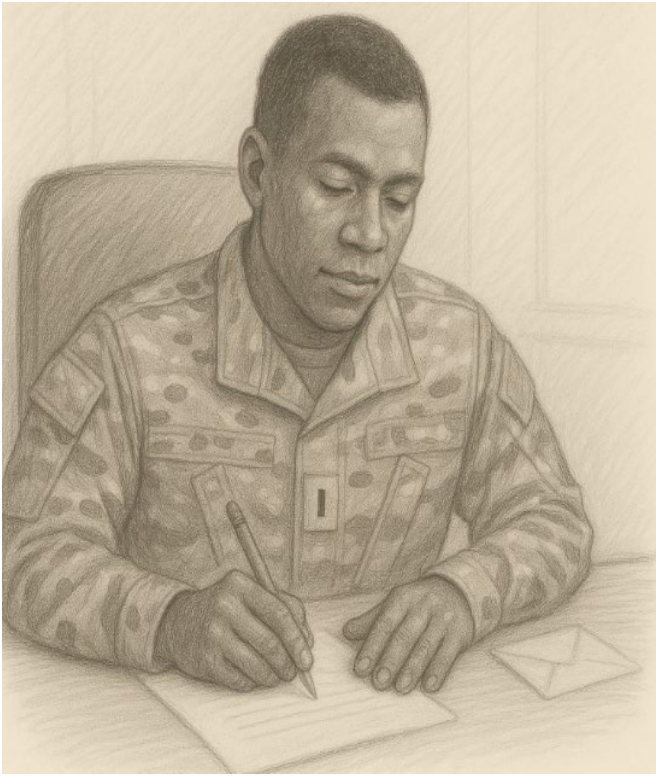
Normality

Going back to the
Way things were meant forgetting
The traumas we'd seen.

Virtual Escape

Those correspondence
Courses were the first steps on
My destined path

FINALLY COMMISSIONED



Green to Gold

It's my day,
And I bet these fuckers
Are out at the bar . . .
Without me.

I must've reminded them
A thousand times:
"11:30 at the high-rise,
Across the parking lot."

And still, it's just me,
My sister, and my mom.

I've got the other half
Of the crew here, though.
These dudes are always solid.

But yeah—this is so them:
Being "fashionably late"
To my ceremony.

I’m so damn nervous.
I haven’t even practiced my speech.
I wrote it down and proofread it,
Then threw it to the side
For another game of beer pong.

These are my last days
Before I head out of town,
And I’m trying to party—
Not stay at home
Studying a speech
No one cares about.

But this time was different.
I needed this.
I don’t know what it is
About the academic setting,
But it brings out
The most relaxed version of you.

Sure, that version also comes

Equipped with a six-pack
Of Keystone Light,
A Lil Wayne mixtape,
And a dorm-room haircut—
But does it get better than this?

I do miss my boys on base,
But it won't be the same.
I'm starting to feel that now.

Even the Master Sergeant
Here at school
Is getting a little lighter
In his tone.

That butter bar is new,
But he knows he's been hard on us.
What's more, he knows
I outrank him—
And I'm sure he's a little uneasy
About that now.

But even he's standing over there,
Watching me get ready,
Like a proud dad.

Where the fuck are these dudes?

My mom looks so proud.
I'm sure she's shown
At least one person
My baby pictures by now.

My sister is just trying
Her best to wheel her in,
I'm sure—hahaha!

I'm just happy I made it
All the way through this thing
Without wearing that damn
Bus driver cap.

If I never have to wear
That thing in my career . . .

It'll be a win for me.

Seriously—these dudes
Better show up.

I remember getting to school
The first day,
Introducing myself to them,
Letting them know
I was in the ROTC program.

You'd have thought
I shot a gun in the air
At that party.

They weren't too thrilled
To hang out with
An "ROTC dude,"
But they quickly learned
The athlete in me
Was the more dominant
Part of my being—hahaha!

I'm still a little pissed
That I had to go this route.
Apparently, I was good enough
For a Division One school,
But not for Officer Candidate School.

Oh well,
A slow grind
Is better than no grind,
I guess.

And you know what?
I made it anyway.

An E6 getting ready
For a commission—
Or at least that's what
My Army Reserves ID says I am!

I have to say,
These classes were the easiest

Part of my days here and
Definitely the reason
I'm leaving with a decent GPA.

No thanks to my damn
Anatomy and physiology courses,
And don't get me started
On chemistry!
That shit almost killed me.

It's the reason there are only
Ten of us here today,
Instead of the thirteen
It was supposed to be.

I really don't think
These guys are showing up.

There goes our
Professor of Military Science,
Waving us down
To take our seats.

I better go grab
The baby pics from my mom
And get her settled in
Before I head to my spot.

All I know is,
If they don't come,
They better have
A cold one waiting for me—

And that's an order.

Butter Bar

It was different
Now. I was the one in charge:
My neck on the line.

Gold Bar Recruiter

A first chance to prove
Yourself as a leader in
A sea of leaders.

BOLC

A blur of parties,
And drinks, before the twenty
Year grind came for me.

Charger Or Challenger

It was more than a
Car, it was a decision
To show my success.

AER Loan

THE SCENE OPENS.
Enter me: a twenty-three-year-old
Second Lieutenant.
It's the tenth of the month.

The bills are paid,
And the car finally fixed—
At least for the moment.
My checking account
Stares back at me with a
Three-dollar balance,
While my subconscious
Sighs with disappointment
At my latest string of decisions.

I wasn't quite myself in those
Moments leading up to
The vodka shots and whiskey
Last night—
Or the nights before that.

My work stresses drown easier
In live music and camaraderie.
I'm young—
I can make it back on the fifteenth.
My memories are what matter,

Or lack thereof,
Since Jäger can have that effect
On a man.

I haven't had a decent meal in weeks,
And at this pace, ramen will
Be my future—
For the foreseeable future—
Unless a few changes are made.

But my weekends are the only
Semblance of normalcy
I have these days.

Lately, everything is

“Yes sir,”
“No ma’am,”
“Roger that, Chief,”
And “Great job, team,”
For good measure.

I miss the college me—
The Thirsty Thursdays and Wild Wednesdays,
The beer pong and house parties.

The pay is better now,
But the twenty-one-hour grind,
And twenty-four-hour duty,
Surpasses even the greatest
Cram session I’ve ever pulled off.

Those days came with their own price—
Fifty thousand, to be exact—
A tag my service is now paying for
Graciously.

Complaining won’t take the debt away,

And the vodka is already drunk.

I guess my wild weekend will continue—
At least after I get paid.

Until then,
It's ramen noodles and cheap soda . . .

But then again . . .
I could just get an AER loan . . .

END SCENE.

Initiating Movement

We left for the field,
Leaving kids, girlfriends, and wives,
Alone for three weeks.

Field Hygiene Kit

Some wet wipes, a tooth
Brush, toothpaste, a bar of soap,
And my shaving kit.

Meals Ready to Eat (MREs)

My favorites were
The lasagna and those cold
Vanilla milkshakes.

Land Navigation

The peaceful woodlands
Took away the frustrations
Of finding those points.

Swamp Ass

Let me start by saying—
IT'S . . . FREAKING . . . HOT.

Ninety-eight-degree rays beat down
On my ACUs and remind me
That the only transparent trait I have
Is the honesty I share with my troops.

Sweat pours down the brim of my cover,
While First Sergeant seems at home in this hell.

They built the NCO corps differently—
But in a good way.

I often wonder why they don't
Get the respect they deserve,
Time and again.

We'll be out here another ten days,
And that shitty Channel 6 meteorologist

Predicts a record heat wave
For the Fort Carson training area—
In February.

It'll hit the 90s this year,
As if the negative 40s last year
Weren't punishment enough.

I only packed snivel gear and long sleeves.
We're 45 miles and six hours out
By M113.

I hope the TOC has air conditioning.
The Battalion Commander plays tough,
But he's a diva most times.

If all else fails,
I can take a bath in the water buffalo.
It's potable,
And a little bleach never killed anyone.

I've got to find shade soon.

This is my first FTX,
And the medics keep teasing
That I've got another hour of this
Before the swamp ass sets in.

Fucking heat wave.

Table Twelves

The Tanks and Bradleys
Move in unison, clearing
Paths to victory.

After Operations Maintenance (AOM)

Don’t know which was worse,
The three-week field problem or
The three days cleaning.

Wrench Monkeys

Seriously, these
Guys fixed my M113.
God bless mechanics!

Bar Nights

One night a week to
Meet friends, talk to women, and
Forget about work.

Relationship Goals

We fight.
We f--k.
Then fight again
The next weekend.

This repetition of young love.

We hate each other,
Then love each other.
The things we say.
Oh, the things we say.

It's enough to drive me through it.

But the sex—
Oh yes, it is ungodly—
Like something from a telenovela.

So, I can understand the logic a little more
Each time you open your mouth

To say all the recklessness that's filled
Your heart all week long—
Though your sober tongue could never recite it.

Seems I still love you too,
Despite every flaw I've mentioned
In our previous conversation, confrontation,
Altercation, clash.

You know what?
F--k it. We've done them all and more this week,
And it's getting harder and harder
To keep up with the storyline of this drama.

The elixir hits me different when I'm mad,
And you're mad,
And we're both feeling the pheromones
Of a Saturday evening out on the town.

Hence why those I'm sorries
Snap out a little quicker these days,
And our bond is a bit stronger.

I’m just glad at the end of the night
We can still laugh at the shitty conversations
We had earlier in the evening,
Grab some fine dining at the nearby Taco Bell,
And keep progressing to the stars
After the hangovers wear off,
And we wash the smell of sex and alcohol
Off our tired bodies.

Auf Wiedersehen

We said forever.
We underestimated
How long that would be.

Starting Over

It’s the silence I
Have to get used to. Knowing
It’s just me, here, now.

No Days Off

My CO didn’t
Care what I went through. Just that
The work was finished.

Taking a Knee

Thank God for the good
Leaders: the ones that notice
Their soldiers hurting.

Fort Benning

Tired from a fourteen-hour
Stretch down
The Bible Belt back roads.

Eyes fixed on the
Exit ten signage,
Veering off for a
Night of needed rest
Before making the
Final miles into
An early report.

Olive Garden
Sounds good tonight.
It will pair
Well with an
Ice-cold beer and
A warm bed.

The morning rush

Into base . . . I missed this.

Nine weeks of Officer
Development and
Already I started feeling
A bit rusty against
The old battle rhythm.

I even forgot
My PTs at the hotel.

Nevertheless,
No one knows who
I am yet, and I'll chalk
It up to a rookie mistake.

I figure I have at least thirty days
Until they hold it against me.

Sometimes it pays to be
"Just another junior officer."

Inprocessing Post

The installation
Checklist was like a mile long!
Just despicable!

Thirty Day APFT

After a full month of
Leave, I'm expected to score
A three hundred? Huh . . .?

One Level Up

All the duties of
A Major, with only a
Quarter of the pay.

Area of Concentration (AOC) Designation

I couldn't believe
I actually got Health
Administration.

Passing The Guidon

They pass it to me.
Its oak frame pressed firmly in my hands,
As those in the crowd now look to me for direction.

I've only just grasped the meaning of responsibility,
Though now it clings to me night and day.

A subtle pause,
Then a brisk turn to my senior advisor,
As we exchange a gesture of encouragement.

Watching the past take a bow for the final time,
I step forward into a shadow
Once lit by his person.

For now, the darkness suits me.
In time, I'll turn the lights back on.

Commander's Workday

Sign a few leave forms.

Sign a stack of school requests.

Sign a few awards.

Backbone

The true leaders of
The formation. The ones I
Could always count on.

Company Run

NCOs calling
Cadence to our side. Morale
Building with each stride.

Command and Staff

All the stats were green,
All the training was complete,
Commander still yelled.

Taking Off My Boots

All duty days
Feel the same.

A Zero-Four wake up,
Followed by PT,
Then a stretch.

Black coffee
With two sugars
And a brief on the
Clusterfucks
That need fixing.

Phone calls
And meetings
That go down
My trap like
Quicksand
On a hot jungle day.

Then a final formation
Filled with brass
Pontification.

It's just enough chaos
To chuckle about,
On the hour-long drive home,
Before I start my second shift
As head of the household.

At least at home
I'm allowed
To take my boots off.

Below The Zone

I did the best I
Could to be “Perfection,” I
Just Wasn’t “Needed.”

Key Developmental Assignments

MED-O, X.O., Staff
Officer, and Company
Commander (Alpha).

Command and General Staff College

Where he would harness
Strategic thought and let go
Of his junior self.

Aging Gracefully

As PT tests got
Harder, he knew his mind would
Be his prime asset.

OAK LEAVES & BAD KNEES

Field Grade

Doer
No more.

Stepped
Back from
The lime
Light and
Into a
Shadowy
Regimen of
Paper pushing,
Politics, and
Meetings.

Mentor
And train
Those below.

Decide for
Those above.

No longer into
The fray, you
Go once more.

Now only early
Into the office.

Civilian HR

My first day on the
Job and already there went
One to the union!

Parking Lot Salute

A young soldier
Walks by me. No salute. Where
Did the standards go?

Mentoring the Next

Watching them sit in
That seat reminds me: it's a
Short trip to this side.

Last Staff Meeting

Delegating is
Hard to do. Especially
When you're a doer.

Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

Sifting through the
Three years that
Led to now.

Memories set the
Stage for tears
Against pictures
Of beers at
Battalion winter formals
And nostalgic Fridays
At the famous downtown breweries.

Strangers became
Friends those days.
Coworkers became
Brothers in arms.

Soon they'll be
The silhouettes
Of a fleeting youth.

Promises to visit,
But life kicks in
More often than not.

The phone calls
Can only soften
The sting of long-distance
Laughter for so long.

And Snapchats don't carry
The same weight
As the physical form.

No, things won't be
The same anymore.

Our boxes clutter
The hallways of
Our now barren apartment.

I let out a thunderous sigh,
Then relapse into my tired motions

Of disassembling bed frames
And kitchen tables.

The movers sound their horns,
To let us know it’s real.

My wife asks,
Please, just one more
Beer for the road?

Let’s build one last memory
Before we continue packing
and start this cycle all over again.

New Duty Station

It’s hard to start from scratch
Knowing that you left
A legacy behind.

Permissive TDY

I had ten days to
Find a house. In this housing
Market . . . Really?

Pizza Hut and Apartment Keys

A box of pizza
And beer to toast the house
And empty bank account.

Household Goods

Finally filling
My “home.” Though only my “home”
For a little while.

Temporary Duty (TDY)

These days on the road
Are starting to blur.

The warmth of my mattress
Calls to me daily,
Yet the comfort of five-star meals
And thousand-thread-count sheets
At this Westin villa
Seems to be the only thing
That occupies my time.

The conferences build on each other,
Yet the attendees remain the same.
It's almost as if the speakers
Memorized the speeches
Of those before them—
Same information,
Same promises,
Same refreshments,
Same suits.

The days float away
As spring peeks
Through winter winds.

I fear I'll have to suffer
Through another five days
Of small talk
And elbow-rubbing—

At least until
It's wheels up again,
And off to another city
For more of the same.

Again.

At least I'm out of the office.
That desk
Will be the death of me one day.

My sciatica flares up

As much as the last speaker did
During his brief
On the hiring freeze.

But I digress—

You know,
Maybe one day I'll make it home,
Back to my bed.

For now,
I'll change my suit
And order room service.

Social hour starts
In four minutes.

Defense Travel System (DTS)

You can get a flight
And hotel for cheap, just don't
Ask for a rental.

Airport Numbness

My people watching
Made the time go by faster . . .
Just not fast enough.

Hotel Sanctuary

It’s the quiet time
I appreciated. The time
I had for emails.

Another City

Meetings in D.C.

Training at Fort Sam Houston.

Quick stop in New York.

OCONUS

It's my first time
Stationed out of country.

My wife
And son sob
From the airport lobby,
Watching me
Carry everything
I own through the
Security line.

Guilt starts to settle in,
Looking back
At the world I'm
Leaving behind.

I signed up to
Make a difference,
But things already
Feel different.

The terminal gates
Look like windows
To other worlds
I've only read about
In books,
And the people speak in
Tongues I can't
Understand.

How can I be
A factor in a place
I don't recognize?
A force when I
Suddenly feel
Fragile?

I take my seat and
Buckle in.

Dozing off,
The flight

Attendant
Asks if
I'm okay.

I let her know
I'm alright.

Hopefully, she
Doesn't see the
Uncertainty in
My eyes and
The desolation
In my smile.

We take off into
The great beyond.

Maybe everything
Will be okay.
Maybe this is my
Time to shine.

But maybe . . .
Just '*maybe'* might
Not be enough.

'Til then, let's sleep.
I'll get my answers
Ten hours from now . . .

Language Barrier

In a place I called
Home but feeling like a fish
On scorching cement.

Jet-Lagged Joes

You could tell the ones
That just landed in country
By their snores at work.

Postcard Home

These were personal.
A piece of my travels sent
To those back at home.

Time Zone Blues

This twelve-hour time gap
Made it hard for me to talk
To the little guy.

Family Separation Pay

It's the birthdays we miss.
I've been Face-Timing him for weeks—
Just to see him smile.

The last time I saw him,
He couldn't walk.

Now,
He's singing along
To cartoons on the television.
He's starting to take an interest
In books,
Even if he can't read the words yet.

Still, I recognize that excitement—
Those early sparks
Of discovering the world
For the first time.

I see it in his eyes:

His innocence is so pure.
It reminds me how deeply
Life captivates us
In our younger years.

Meanwhile,
I stay locked
In this endless pursuit:
A paycheck,
Some paid time off,
And the hope of holding him again—
Three months from now.

He's such a light,
Such an incandescent soul.

But as the saying goes,
"Those diapers aren't cheap,"
And the daycare bill
Is just as back-breaking.

The Child Care Aware vouchers help,

But they don't fully soften
The sting of inflation.

Still, what we're building—
You can't put a price on that.

Another FTX
Doesn't seem so bad
When I think about
How these sacrifices
Might clear a path
To something better
For him.

But even with that purpose . . .
It's the memories we miss.

That wears on me
More than I'd like to admit.

Family Goodbyes

Those orders cut deep
When familys involved. Damn
The destination.

Gym Rats

Pumping iron took
My mind off those I left when
I got on that plane.

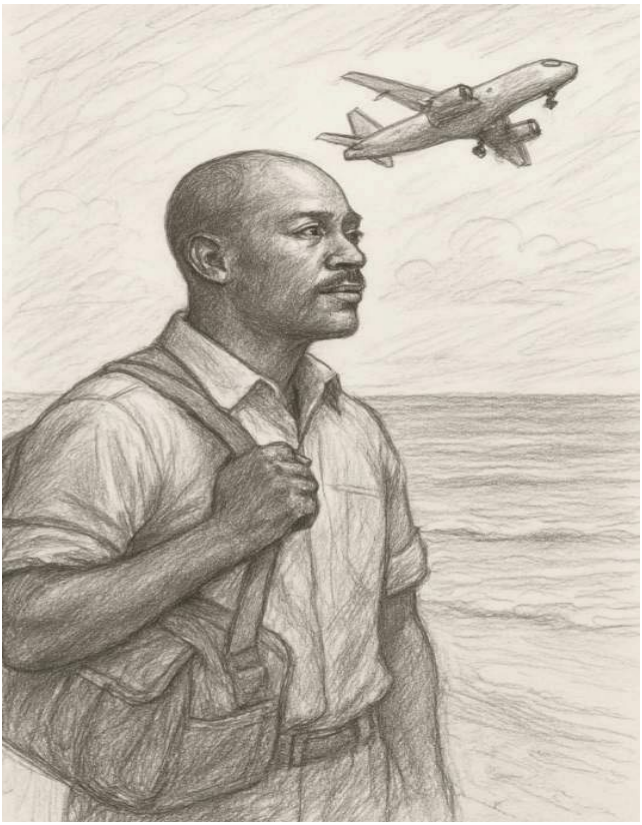
Leaves and Passes

It was a new place—
A new region—why not see
This world I live in?

Medical Readiness

The nagging pains that
Won't go away. Those are the
Ones to watch out for.

EXITING GRACEFULLY



M.E.B.

A little taken aback
By it all.

It's over.

Two doctors
Signed off,
And here I am—
Picking out suits
For interviews.

My military service,
Honorable,
But tanks and Bradleys
Don't exactly translate
To a desk job.

I can't tell
If it's the tinnitus
Or my conscience

Sounding off
In my head
So fucking loudly.

My boss keeps asking
If there's anything
He can do
To help me
Transition smoothly.

And all I can think is,
"Yeah, give me
A bachelor's
In something
I can actually use."

I thought this was going to be it.
You know—
Forty years,
Four stars,
And an office
At the Pentagon someday.

Instead,
I'm just another officer
With a bad back,
Busted knees,
And a handful of other issues
I need to remember to claim
Before I get the boot—
So to speak.

I look back up at my boss
And smile,
Tell him I'm good, politely,
Then figure out
What I'm going to tell my family.

They rely on my income
And my healthcare.

I don't want to think about that now.
I just got this news,
And it still hasn't really sunk in

That it’s over.

My kids will be devastated.
I had orders to Germany,
And they were looking forward
To living there.

They look up to me.
They think I’m strong.
How will they look at me now?

Not broken—just . . . benched.
For good.

I have to turn this in my favor
Somehow . . .

I’ll still have my GI Bill
To work with.
That might offset
Everything else.

But it'll take too long,
And my kids need to eat today.

And my wife is hounding me
Again about that damn cruise
Like I've even got time
For a trip to the Bahamas.

I could go into real estate . . .
Nah, the housing market sucks.
Maybe investing . . .
But that's too damn slow.

My mind hurts from this all . . .
Never mind—
That's the tinnitus again.

I need to remember to claim that condition:
100 percent disabled.
At least that's something
I can strive for now.

Disability Claim

The only time these
Soldiers want sleep apnea
And lower back pain.

Skillsbridge

I'm an "intern" for
The next three months? I thought I
Was the CEO?

DD214

A piece of paper,
A firm handshake, and a “Thanks.”
Then it’s out the door.

No More Uniform

Hung on my wall. A
Lifetime ago staring back
As I shut the door.

Glasses Raised High

Let's raise our glasses
As we toast to trauma.

You test me daily,
But I fight you.

I hear you back there,
Don't you worry your sweet little head.

Deep in the crevice of my mind,

I think you love me.
That's why you hug my thoughts
And refuse to loosen your grip on my reality.

It's ok though,
I love you too.

You make me stronger.
Don't mind the crying;

It’s part of the process.

I promise I’m ok,
And that it’s working—
The process that is,
Not your perseverance.

Though I do admire your determination.

Anyways,

Cheers to our good times.
I’m glad you could make it.

Tonight, and every other night,
You keep me company.

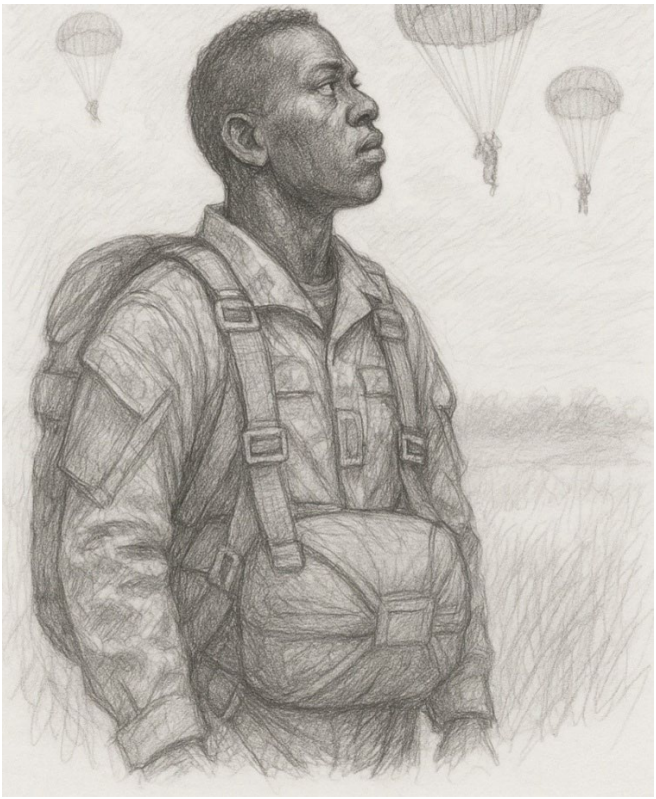
But feel free to leave anytime.
Trust me,
No one’s forcing you to stay.

¡Salud!

Last Epiphany

Now, I fade into
Black. At least now I've gotten
Somewhere . . . Finally . . .

EPILOGUE



Final Formation

You don’t notice the change until it’s behind you.
One day the boots are broken in,
The rank fits, the salute feels normal,
Then suddenly, it’s your last PT test,
Your last counseling,
Your last time standing in line for nothing.

This journey isn’t a movie—
It’s admin slips, duty rosters,
And learning how to keep your spirit
While playing by the book.

When it’s over,
You wonder if the uniform wore you
More than you wore it.

These pages are not closure;
They’re reflection.
For every soldier who’s ever stood
At parade rest or attention

And thought,

“How did I get here?”

About the Author

Dr. Kevin Knight is an active-duty Army officer, tenured health care executive and an associate professor from Brooklyn, NY.

Draped in the colors
of red, white, and blue, we serve
for God and country.

— Dr. Kevin Knight

L'armée, by Dr. (MAJ) Kevin Knight, is a compelling and insightful collection that captures the everyday experiences, challenges, and triumphs of life in uniform.

With vivid imagery, unflinching honesty, and lyrical depth, this work transcends the battlefield to explore identity, sacrifice, and transformation.

Through bold reflection and striking poetic expression, Knight invites readers into the nuanced world of military service—where duty and emotion intertwine, and where everyone carries a story.

Enjoy the mission.